



From the desk of Commissioner Wayne Johnson

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OpEd by Commissioner Wayne Johnson Sheds Light on Major Problem with Ethics Board Process “Review Committee” allows complaints to be heard by select few, behind closed doors

Bernalillo County- Commissioner Wayne Johnson has penned an OpEd examining a serious problem with how verified ethics complaints are handled by the County’s Ethics Board.

The attached OpEd details the problem, which is related to Ethics Board’s adoption of specific Rules and Regulations in October 2010. Those Rules and Regulations included language that created a “review committee” of 3 members. The “review committee” – made up of Ethics Board members appointed by the Ethics Board Chair - has the authority to summarily dismiss complaints in secret prior to a public hearing.

The County’s Ethics Ordinance “clearly intends that a full board of five members be present to hear complaints – even providing for a replacement appointee where a member has a conflict of interest,” writes Commissioner Johnson. “It does not include a “review committee,” and does not permit hearings by less than the full board.”

In light of this problem, and because of recent changes by the State Legislature to the Governmental Conduct Act, Commissioner Johnson will be part of an effort to review and revise the Ethics Ordinance, bringing it in line with public expectations, as well as state law.

“The people of Bernalillo County deserve open, transparent, and ethical government. There can be no shortcuts to dismissal and no short circuiting of the original process created by the Commission,” writes Commissioner Johnson. “Valid complaints need to be heard in public not dismissed behind closed doors. It’s our responsibility as elected officials to restore and maintain the trust in county government. Obviously, we still have a long way to go.”

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